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Community composting activity in the UK - 2006



Published by Integrated Waste Systems, The Open University, Milton Keynes. May 2007.

Survey carried out by The Open University, the Community Composting Network and London Community Recycling Network.

Report written by Dr Rachel Slater, Integrated Waste Systems, The Open University.

Acknowledgements

The project team would like to thank all the respondents for their time and effort in providing the information presented in this report.

The survey presented in this report is a key part of a project called 'Unlocking the Potential of Community Composting'; we would like to thank Defra for funding this work under their Waste and Resources R&D Programme (ref WRT400). The project is being carried out by the Integrated Waste Systems group at The Open University in association with the Community Composting Network (CCN), London Community Recycling Network (LCRN) and the New Economics Foundation.

The views in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of The Open University or project partners.



The Open University

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Executive Summary

The findings presented in this report represent the first time a comprehensive profiling of the community composting sector has been conducted and results published. Compiling a comprehensive data-set of community composting characteristics is a key part of a Defra funded project called 'Unlocking the Potential of Community Composting'. The project is being carried out by the Integrated Waste Systems group at The Open University in association with the Community Composting Network (CCN), London Community Recycling Network (LCRN) and the New Economics Foundation

The profile of the community composting sector covers data reported for the calendar year 2006. A questionnaire was distributed to 193 members of composting and recycling networks across England, Scotland and Wales, 132 responses were received representing an excellent response rate of 68%. A questionnaire was also sent to 50 non-members and 17 responses were received (34% response rate). Around three-quarters of respondents are actively engaged in community composting.

From the results of the profiling exercise, most community composting organisations are based in England (88%). The most active regions in terms of quantities composted are the South West and the North (North West, North East, Yorkshire and Humberside).

Community composting in urban areas tends to be connected to allotments, community gardens or city farms - typically some of the smallest sites. Results show that London has the highest density of organisations compared to other regions across England but accounts for only 1% of material composted. This is due to the small scale of urban sites and that one-third of respondents in London are involved with composting education and promotion rather than collecting and processing material.

Findings show the community composting sector comprises a diverse range of groups and organisations running a wide variety of projects. Activities that fall under the umbrella of community composting include: collecting/receiving and processing material, running education campaigns, promoting home composting, facilitating others to develop/promote community composting. All respondents actively engaged in community composting carry out at least one of these activities and many are involved in more than one. Overall 80% of organisations are involved in collecting and composting material and 20% are involved in forms of community composting activity other than collecting and composting. In addition, many organisations are also involved in other waste and/or non-waste activities.

For 40% of organisations, undertaking composting is their main objective and activity. For 60% of organisations composting is an activity which complements other social and environmental objectives. Composting may be carried out alongside other recycling activities or more commonly, alongside non-waste activities such as community gardens, city farms, local food production, day and residential services for adults with special needs, training and work integration schemes.

Most community composting organisations have a mixture of social and environmental aims. Over 80% of respondents said that 'bringing together the local community', 'promoting waste minimisation' and 'diverting waste from landfill' are important aims.

Findings show that 84 organisations are involved in collecting/receiving and composting material at 121 sites. Most respondents run one site, with 12 organisations running multiple sites. Responses show that 20,765 tonnes of material was composted at community run sites in 2006. When extrapolated to account for non-respondents this increases to an estimated 170 sites and

21,500 tonnes. When considering tonnage it is important to note that this figure relates specifically to composting carried out at community sites. It should be borne in mind that the sector also contributes to organic material diverted from landfill through educational and promotional activity, e.g. master composter schemes that promote home composting. In addition, one large social enterprise makes a significant contribution by collecting over 20,000 tonnes per annum of organic waste for composting. However, this figure is not included in the data for community sites as the material is composted at commercial sites.

The proximity principle is an important element of sustainability and underpins the ethos of community composting. This is reflected in the profile of the sector with features such as decentralisation and small-scale activities showing up strongly; around half of sites process ≤ 10 tonnes per annum (tpa) and two-thirds process ≤ 30 tpa. Twenty eight sites process ≥ 100 tpa (including three that process ≥ 1000 tpa) which collectively accounted for 93% of all material composted by the sector.

The largest community composting sites are more likely to be run by organisations dedicated to composting, whereas the smaller sites are more likely to be run by organisations involved in a range of activities.

To-date the development of the sector has relied predominantly on composting garden waste mainly from households but also from local authorities' parks and gardens and allotments and community gardens. Most sites (89%) use an open composting process (windrows, bays or boxes). Responses suggest around half the material composted is used on-site or given away and around half is sold.

The community composting sector offers significant opportunities for volunteering. Results show that over 1,000 volunteers were involved with the sector in 2006. In addition the sector also offered trainee opportunities or placements for over 200 workers and employed 178 core, paid staff.

It is difficult to monitor the development of the sector due to the lack of previous studies. However, comparison with information that included the community sector as part of a wider composting industry study¹ indicates the number of organisations involved in community composting may have increased around ten-fold since the late 1990s and quantities of material composted looks to have increased around fourteen-fold from approximately 1,500tpa to 21,000tpa.

This development could continue as over three-quarters of respondents said they want to develop and expand their composting activity, so in terms of the aspirations of community organisations the outlook is optimistic. However, building on this optimism and seizing development opportunities means overcoming numerous barriers. Findings show that the most common barriers are legislation and bureaucracy, lack of space or lack of alternative suitable sites, lack of funding, not enough volunteers and problems around the level of time and commitment involved for volunteers.

¹ Slater, R., Frederickson, J. and Gilbert, J. (2001) *The State of Composting in the UK 1999*. The Composting Association, Northampton.

1. Introduction

The survey detailed in this report is a key part of a Defra funded project called 'Unlocking the Potential of Community Composting'². The project is being carried out by the Integrated Waste Systems group at The Open University in association with the Community Composting Network (CCN), London Community Recycling Network (LCRN) and the New Economics Foundation.

This is the first time a comprehensive survey of the community composting sector has been undertaken and findings published. The survey aimed to provide original data relating to the diversity of the sector including the environmental, social and educational activities of groups and organisations involved in promoting or carrying out composting in their communities. Whilst the diversity of the sector is well accepted, the role of this survey was to provide much needed detail on the nature, scale and mix of activities.

The following section explains the meaning of community composting used in this report while Section 3 outlines the survey method and the results are presented in Sections 4-10. The findings cover: the type of group/organisation involved in the sector; the range, mix and details of composting and related activities; employment and volunteer opportunities; work with local authorities; evaluation processes; income and funding; barriers and problems; and future plans.

2. Meaning of community composting

It is well known that the community composting sector is made up of a diverse range of groups and organisations running a wide variety of composting projects. Given this diversity it would be inappropriate and misleading to try and determine a 'one size fits all' definition. We wanted to provide as complete a picture as possible of the groups and activities that come under the umbrella of community composting. In doing this, the meaning of community composting we used to develop the survey contains the following characteristics:

- Includes a range of groups/organisations from informal collectives of individuals, small grant/charitable funded organisations, organisation relying on grants and tradable income, through to larger scale self-funded entities. These will include third sector organisations that fall under the community and volunteers categories as well as organisations that fit with models of social enterprise.
- Includes organisations involved in a range of composting and composting related activities, including one or more of the following: collecting and composting material; educational campaigns; promoting home composting and facilitating others to carry out composting;
- Carrying out and promoting composting might be the main activity of the organisation, or it might complement additional resource management activity (such as waste minimisation or re-use) or broader sustainability and community support activity;
- Includes organisations with a mix of environmental and social objectives.

These characteristics helped us structure the survey and capture a more representative profile of the sector than would have been possible using other definitions. For example, in the evaluation of the Big Lottery Fund's Transforming Waste Programme community composting is described as 'initiatives aimed at engaging households within local communities in collective composting activity'. This presented us with difficulties about what is meant by 'engagement' and 'collective'. It appears to infer that households are expected to undertake the 'collective activity', which may or may not be the case. It also appears to exclude community based organisations that focus on composting education and awareness raising. The project team decided on a wider

² Defra project reference WRT400 funded under the 2nd call of the Waste and Resources R&D Programme.

meaning of community composting in this project in order to capture as detailed a picture of current activity as possible.

3. Survey method

3.1 Groups and organisations surveyed

A 'core' population set of 193 organisations known to have an interest in community composting was compiled from membership databases of composting and recycling networks (CCN, LCRN, DCCN etc). An additional 'speculative' population set of 50 organisations who were non-members was identified through other networks, volunteer agencies and associations promoting wider environmental activities. In total 243 organisations were surveyed.

3.2 Questionnaire design

A questionnaire was designed by The Open University and CCN. This covered a range of topics including community composting activity; staff and volunteers working in the sector; working arrangements with local authorities; and evaluation processes. The questionnaire was piloted by a twelve community composters and amendments were made based on feedback. A copy of the questionnaire is given in Appendix 1.

3.3 Survey administration

A postal survey was considered the most appropriate distribution method. This was because email details were not known for all of the target organisations and also because this method can elicit a better response rate compared to electronic distribution. A prize draw was used as an incentive to respond. The distribution included a pre-paid envelope for responses, covering letter detailing the prize draw and a brief of the overall project.

The questionnaires were sent out in late January 2007 with an initial closing date in February. However, in managing the survey this closing date was flexible in order to include as many responses as possible. Responses received up to two-months after the initial closing date were included.

A comprehensive telephone 'chase-up' of non-respondents was carried out by CCN and LCRN and began one week before the initial deadline. Organisations known to be involved in some form of composting activity were prioritized in this chase-up. When contacted these organisations were given the option to complete the questionnaire over the telephone. In a small number of cases where it was not possible to obtain a full response, answers to the main questions were obtained over the telephone.

Responses were checked and important omissions or inconsistencies were clarified with respondents. Statistical data was entered into SPSS and Excel databases. Textual answers to open questions were recorded in word and where appropriate categorised and added to the statistical data.

3.4 Response rate

The survey achieved an excellent response rate, largely due to extensive chase-up which prioritised organisations who were members of the composting and recycling networks. Overall the survey achieved a response rate of 61%. The members targeted returned a response rate of 68% whilst non-members returned a response rate of 34%.

3.5 Number of respondents and accounting for non-respondents

The survey received a response from 149 groups/organisations; 109 responses (73%) were from groups active in carrying out or promoting community composting activity; 40 responses (27%) were from groups that are interested but not currently active in community composting.

Most of findings in this report are the actual survey results and have not been extrapolated to account for non-respondents. The only exception to this where we considered extrapolation useful is the section on the number of composting sites and quantities of material composted (see Section 4.2). The survey team are confident that all sites known to be composting in excess of 100 tonnes per annum (tpa) have been reported in the survey. Therefore a simple extrapolation of tonnage to account for non-respondents would not be valid. Applying this extrapolation to both the 'core' and 'speculative' population sets would further compound this bias as non-respondents in the core population are more likely to be involved in composting compared to those in the speculative population.

A more robust extrapolation approach was taken. This focused on accounting for non-respondents from the 'core' rather than the 'speculative' survey population. We used the profile (number of sites and average sites size within different size bands) of sites that composted up to 100tpa in order to make estimates for non respondents. Actual and extrapolated data on the number of sites and quantities composted are detailed in Section 4.2.

4. Composting activity

4.1 Nature and diversity of the community composting sector

4.1.1 Types of organisation

The nature of community composting means that there are likely to be more groups working informally without legal status compared with the wider community waste sector. This is borne out by our results (Table 4.1) which show that around 38% of organisations involved in community composting are people working informally in groups or as un-incorporated groups with a governing document. The majority of these operate at the smaller scale of community composting (see Section 4.2). In contrast, the overwhelming majority of organisations in the wider community waste sector are companies limited by guarantee and/or charities (Williams et al, 2005). Table 4.1 shows that community interest companies - the new type of company designed for social enterprises who want to use their surpluses for public good - are starting to emerge in the community composting sector.

Table 4.1 - Organisation type and legal status of community composters

Organisation type / legal status	Percentage (%) of respondents
Informal group	20%
Un-incorporated with governing document	18%
Registered charity	18%
Company limited by guarantee	20%
Both a charity and company limited by guarantee	13%
Community interest company	3%
Other	8%
Total	100%

4.1.2 Diversity and range of activities

The diversity of the community composting sector is illustrated through the range of activities in which organisations are involved. Findings show that for some organisations, composting is the main focus of their activity and this involves actually collecting/receiving and processing the material. In addition, they tend to be involved with promoting composting within their community either at an individual and/or collective level. Other organisations involved in composting waste are also concerned with wider issues of sustainable resource management and are involved in minimisation, re-use and other recycling activity. For other organisations broader issues of more sustainable living are at their core and they focus on issues such as organic gardening, local food production and renewable energy. Then there are organisations that offer local support through intermediate labour market opportunities, services for the elderly and infirm and developing community based activities. For all these organisations composting is important either as a primary activity or as a complementary activity helping them achieve wider objectives.

To help simplify this diversity, data supplied by 107 respondents has been grouped into 5 activity types. These categories are detailed in Figure 4.1 which also shows the number of organisations involved in each type. It should be noted that many organisations engage in more than one type of activity.

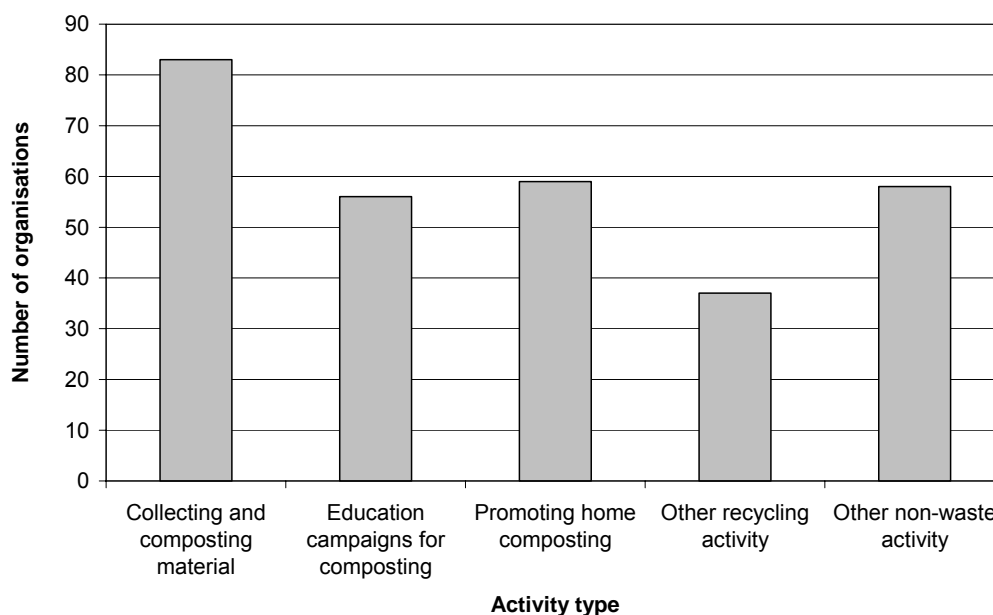


Figure 4.1 - Number of organisations involved in each type of community composting and related activity (n=107)

It should be noted that the first three activities listed in Figure 4.1 (collecting and composting material; education campaigns for composting; and promoting home composting) come under our heading of community composting - hence *all* our respondents that are actively engaged in community composting carry out one or more of these activities.

Although many community composting organisations are involved in more than one of the composting activities in Figure 4.1, around 80% are involved in collecting and composting material and 20% are involved in community composting activity other than collecting and composting. Of this 20%, three-quarters are involved in promoting home composting and the remainder are involved in other educational activities such as working with schools.

Figure 4.2 shows the proportion of organisations that are involved in community composting only, and the proportion that are involved in composting as well as the recycling of other materials and/or non-waste related activities. This shows that there is no single combination of activities that dominates the community composting sector; rather the activities in which organisations are involved are spread across the mix of options.

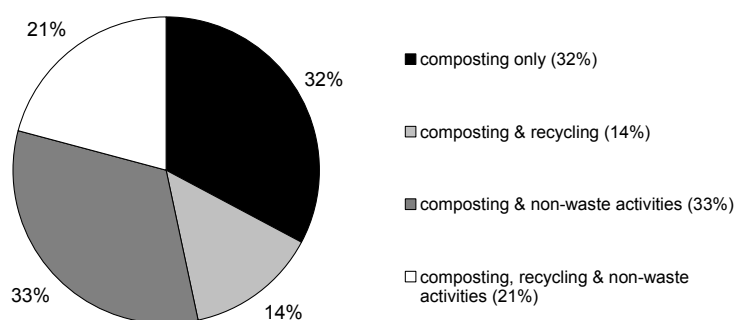


Figure 4.2 - Percentage of organisations involved in composting only, composting and recycling and/or non-waste activities

4.1.3 Importance of different activities

A significant proportion of organisations (60%) stated that their main focus was on activities categorised as 'other than community composting' and most of these said that this activity is more important to their organisation than composting. This illustrates how community composting plays a significant role in contributing to other objectives. For half of these organisations their main activity is non-waste related, most commonly these include community gardens, city farms, allotments and local and organic food production and distribution, with a few running services for adults with physical/learning difficulties and providing intermediate labour opportunities.

For 40% of organisations community composting was stated to be their main activity. Around half of these are not significantly involved in other activities and the other half are involved in waste activities such as minimisation and recycling and/or non-waste related activities such as those mentioned above.

Community organisations involved in the waste and resource sector are often perceived in terms of their mix of environmental and social aims, but it is not always clear what is meant by 'environmental' and 'social'. We wanted to capture a more detailed picture of the different aims that come under these headings. Respondents were asked to give the level of importance to their organisation of different environmental, social and educational aims. The results are illustrated in Figure 4.3, Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5.

The survey asked respondents to rate the level of importance of the following 'environmental' aims - divert waste from landfill, promote waste minimisation, improve local soil quality and improve local environment/green spaces. They were also given the option to add and rate other environmental objectives. Diverting waste from landfill is important for virtually all community

composters; 85% said this was 'most' important and 10% said 'fairly' important. The 5% that said this is not applicable/slightly important are allotment groups and community gardens. Improving local soil quality and local green spaces is fairly evenly split - this is most important for around one-third of respondents, fairly important for one-third and not applicable/slightly important for the remaining third. The latter includes groups involved in promoting rather than producing compost. 'Other' important environmental objectives raised by respondents include 'reduce transport/mileage' and 'local food production'.

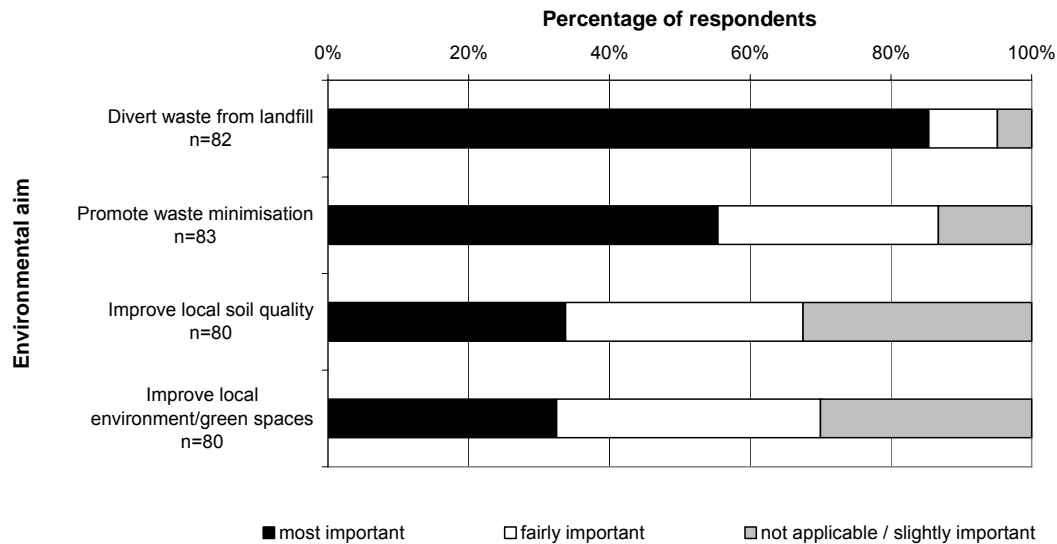


Figure 4.3 - The importance respondents place on different *environmental* aims of their activities

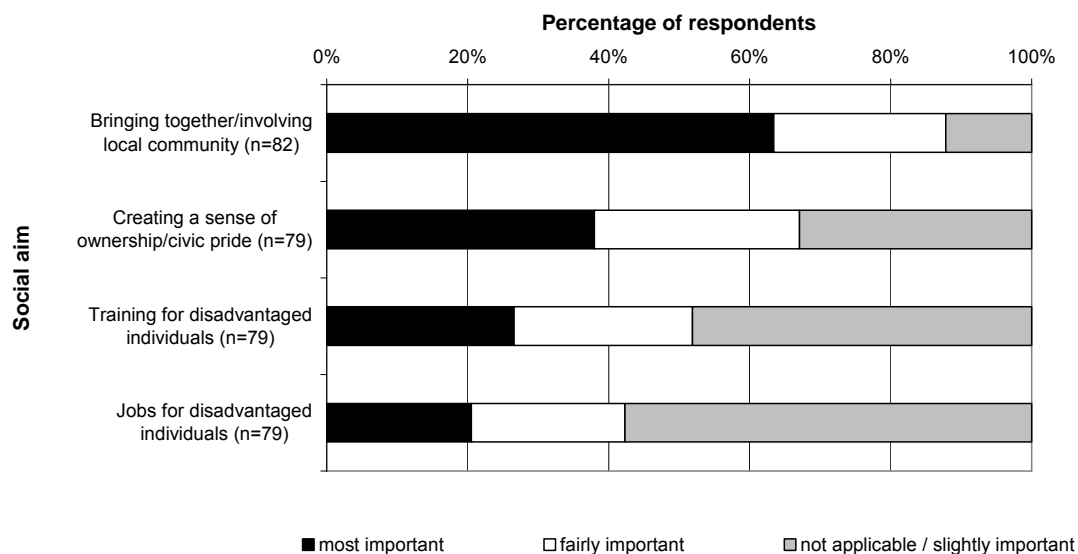


Figure 4.4 - The importance respondents place on different *social* aims of their activities

Respondents were asked to rate the level of importance for the following social aims - bringing together the local community, creating a sense of ownership/civic pride, providing training and job opportunities for disadvantaged individuals. Figure 4.4 shows that 'bringing together the local community' is considered 'most' important by the largest proportion of respondents (63%) and a further 24% considers it 'fairly' important. Around one-third that said this is 'not applicable/slightly important' and these tend to promote composting rather than run a site. Training and job opportunities for disadvantaged groups are 'most' or 'fairly' important for around half of respondents. Not surprisingly these respondents tend to offer therapeutic work environments or intermediate labour markets for work integration. For around 60% that said jobs and training for disadvantaged groups is important consider composting complementary to other activities rather than a main focus.

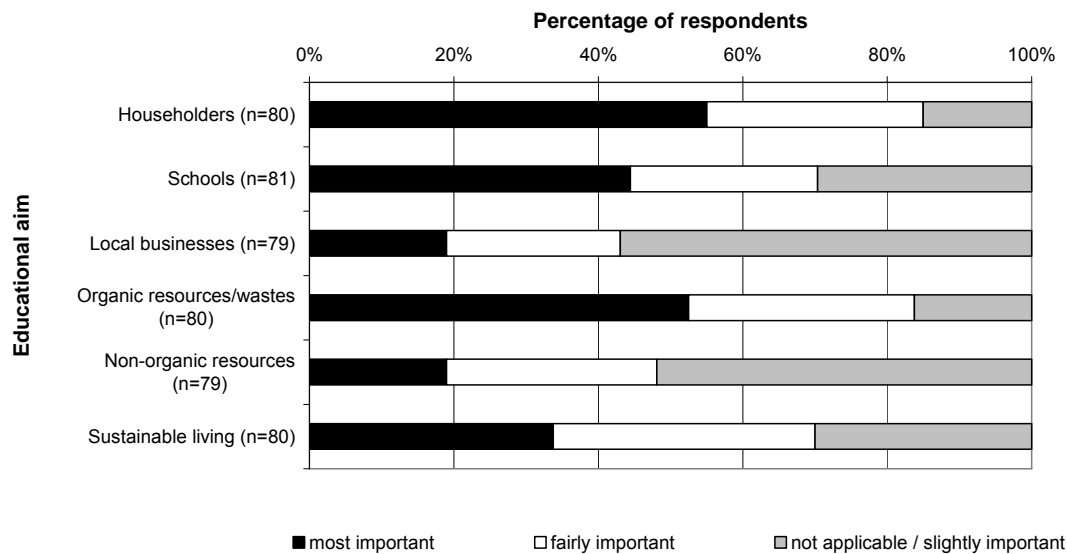


Figure 4.5 - The importance respondents place on different *educational* aims of their activities

In the education section, respondents were asked to rate the importance of education aimed at householders, schools, local businesses and education about organic resources, non-organic resources and sustainable living. Figure 4.5 shows that education aimed at householders was most or fairly important for 85% of respondents - this reflects the policy emphasis on household waste and that most waste composted by the sector comes from households (Section 4.2.4). In contrast over-half of respondents said education aimed at local businesses is 'not applicable/slightly important'. Over two-thirds of respondents said wider messages about sustainable living is 'most' or 'fairly' important in their educational aims, whereas as messages about non-organic resources was important for fewer respondents. This reflects Figure 4.2 above, which shows that a greater proportion of respondents are involved in 'composting and non-waste activities' compared to 'composting and recycling'.

4.2 Composting sites, materials processed and end-use

This section presents findings on the number and size of community based composting sites, type and source of materials processed and end-use of the composted materials. These findings relate to groups that collect/receive material *and* carry out composting, i.e. it reports quantities composted at community sites. It does not estimate quantities diverted from landfill as a result of home composting promoted by the community sector. Also, it does not include material collected by community groups but then composted by commercial organisations. However, it is

important to bear in mind that one large social enterprise is a major player in the collection of both dry recyclables and compostables and they collect over 20,000tpa of organic waste for composting³. This figure is not included in the data presented here as the waste was composted at commercial rather than community run sites.

4.2.1 Composting activity - number and size of sites, quantities composted

Responses to the survey report 84 organisations involved in collecting/receiving and composting material at 121 sites. Most respondents run one site, with 12 organisations running multiple sites⁴.

The community based nature of sites means that many of them operate at a relatively small-scale. Collecting information on quantities processed is difficult as often groups have no requirement or need to have facilities to weigh material collected/received for composting. To account for this the survey asked respondents to estimate quantities of material processed within a range. Nearly all respondents (82 out of 84) provided information based on this range. Figure 4.6 shows that the most common site size processed less than 10 tonnes per site in 2006 (accounting for around half of all sites recorded). Two-thirds of all sites processed less than 30 tonnes per annum (tpa). Almost one in four sites processed over 100tpa, three sites processed in excess of 1,000tpa and the largest reported site processed 4,000tpa.

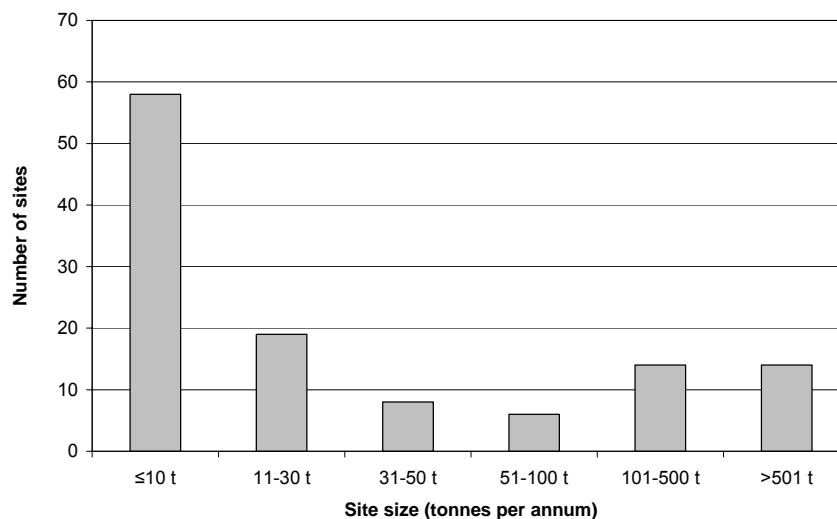


Figure 4.6 - Number of community composting sites related to site throughput (based on tonnes processed per annum)

For sites processing in excess of 100tpa respondents were asked to supply precise tonnage data. This data has been combined with an average of the four categories up to 100 tonnes (e.g. for the range ≤10t per site a median of 5t throughput per site was estimated, for 11-30t a median of 15t was estimated etc). This gives an estimate of 20,765 tonnes composted at 121 community run sites in 2006. Approximately 93% of the material (19,370t) was composted by the 28 larger sites each of which processed in excess of 100tpa.

³ Williams et al (2005) *Review of the Community Waste Sector in England*. Defra, London.

⁴ A small number of respondents are part of a BREW pilot programme to develop/facilitate on-site composting at establishments with catering facilities. Where respondents facilitate rather than run the sites we have endeavoured to include data about the sites they facilitate (making sure these sites are not double counted).

The survey team are confident that all sites known to be composting in excess of 100tpa have been reported in the survey⁵. Therefore a simple extrapolation of tonnage to account for non-respondents would be biased. Applying this extrapolation to both the core and speculative population sets would further compound this bias.

A more robust approach was taken that used the profile of sites that fell within the ranges up to 100tpa detailed in Figure 4.6 and limited the extrapolation to core survey population of network members (CCN, LCRN, DCCN) rather than the more speculative peripheral groups. This gives an estimate of around 21,500tpa composted at around 170 community run sites. A summary of the actual and extrapolated number of sites and tonnes composted is given in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 - Survey responses and extrapolated number of sites and tonnes composted

Method	Total number of sites	Total composted (tonnes per annum)
Survey responses	121	20,765
Extrapolated to account for non-responses of network members	170	21,500

4.2.2 Composting sites and organisation's activities

Table 4.3 shows the spread of sites by size and organisation's activities. This shows that over three-quarters of the very small scale sites (≤ 10 tpa) are operated by groups involved in composting as well as non-waste related activities and/or recycling. In contrast, three-quarters of sites in the largest category (≥ 500 tpa) are operated by groups involved in composting only and not involved in other activities. This profile suggests that larger sites are more likely to be run by organisations dedicated to composting rather than by organisations involved in a range of activities.

Table 4.3 - Organisation's activity and the number and size of sites operated

Activity	Number of sites categorised by site size (tonnes per annum)						Total
	≤ 10 t	11-30t	31-50t	51-100t	101-500t	≥ 500 t	
Composting only	11	6	3	3	3	10	36
Composting & recycling	1	4	2	1	4	2	14
Composting & non-waste activities	31	4	2	0	1	0	38
Composting & recycling & non-waste activities	13	5	1	2	3	2	26
Total	56	19	8	6	11	14	114

4.2.3 Composting methods used

The composting methods used at individual sites are summarised in Table 4.4. Some sites use more than one composting method, predominantly a mixture of open-air windrows/bays/boxes and some form of enclosed in-vessel system. Of the 121 sites studied 108 (89%) used an open air system of either windrows, heaps, bays or boxes, and 34 (28%) used some form of in-vessel system. The 'other' method includes wormeries.

⁵ Estimates were made for 2 organisations known to be composting >100 tpa who did not respond. These estimates were taken from Defra's review of the Community Waste Sector (Williams et al, 2005; see Footnote 2, p10) and the Green Funding Forum (2005).

Table 4.4 - Number of sites and composting methods

Composting method	Number of sites using 1 composting method	Number of sites using 2 or more composting methods	Total
Open air - windrows/heaps/bays/boxes	79	29	108
In-vessel	10	24	34
Other	1	7	8

4.2.4 Types and source of material composted

This section covers the types of source segregated material collected and/or received for composting. Most of the material composted by the community sector (79%) is garden waste that is composted on its own and comes from a variety of sources. Table 4.5 shows that garden waste from 'households only' contributes 28%, while garden waste from 'households, allotments and community gardens' contributes 23%, and garden waste from a mixture of 'households, local authorities and allotments/community gardens' contributes 28%.

Some schemes accept a mixture of garden and food waste from households and commercial sources; mixtures not including meat accounts for 20% of total material composted and mixtures including meat accounts for 1%. Schemes exclusively composting food waste accounted for less than 1% of total material composted. However, food waste composting is a developing area for the sector and is expected to increase substantially over the next few years. This is highlighted by respondents' future plans (see Section 10); several organisations are planning food waste composting projects and two are about to embark on relatively large-scale schemes servicing thousands of households.

Table 4.5 - Quantities and sources of material composted

Source of material composted	Sites accepting material from specific sources		Quantities composted from specific sources	
	Number of sites	Percentage of sites	Total amount (tonnes per annum)	Percentage of total amount
Garden waste - households only	27	23%	5740	28%
Garden waste - households & allotments/community gardens	39	32%	4775	23%
Garden waste - households & local authorities & allotments/community gardens	22	18%	5748	28%
Garden waste - allotments and community gardens only	10	8%	70	<1%
Garden and food waste (no meat) - households and commercial	11	9%	4125	20%
Garden and food waste (including meat) - households and commercial	3	3%	232	1%
Food waste only - households and commercial	8	7%	55	<1%
Information not provided	1	<1%	20	<1%
Total	121	100%	20765	100%

Note - this data relates to material collected/received and composted by sites included in the study, it does not include material collected by community sector organisations and composted by commercial organisations.

4.2.5 Collection methods used

Material for composting may be collected by groups or brought to their site by a third party. In this latter option the site acts as a bring facility offering a similar service to the garden waste deposit service provided by Civic Amenity sites.

Findings show that 70% of community sites offer a bring site facility - they may rely exclusively on this method or combine it with other collection methods. Results in Table 4.6 show that 32% of sites rely exclusively on third parties (mainly householders but also some local authorities) bringing material to their site and bring site methods account for 39% of all material composted - the largest proportion compared to other collection options. The 30% of sites that do not offer a bring facility rely exclusively on kerbside/door-to-door collections from households and this method accounts for 25% of all material composted.

A small number of groups who collect material from Civic Amenity sites (combined with offering bring facilities and kerbside collections) run 9% of sites accounting for 30% of material composted. This is a far greater proportion of material composted in relation to number of sites compared to other collection options. However, as it was not possible to collect tonnage data for each specific route it is not possible to ascertain the relative contribution from Civic Amenity sites, kerbside collection and bring facilities in this combined option.

The 'other' category includes very small community garden and allotment sites (that largely rely on material produced on-site) which explains why they account for a large proportion of sites relative to the small proportion of total material composted.

Table 4.6 - Number of sites and quantities collected using specific collection methods

Methods of collecting and/or receiving material	Sites using specific collection methods		Total material composted from specific collection methods	
	Number of sites	Percentage of sites	Tonnes	Percentage of tonnes
Kerbside / door-to-door collections	34	30%	4827	25%
Bring site facility*	37	32%	7558	39%
Kerbside collections & bring site facility	13	11%	1015	5%
Bring site facility* & Civic Amenity collections	2	2%	1875	9%
Bring site facility* & kerbside & Civic Amenity sites	8	7%	4070	21%
Other	20	18%	195	1%
Total	114	100%	19540	100%

* Bring site facility refers to the composting site acting as a bring site facility and accepting material brought to their site
 Note - information on collection methods was not forthcoming for 7 sites.

4.2.6 Distribution of the composted material

Respondents were asked how the composted material is distributed; whether it is sold, given away, used on-site, or a combination of these. Figure 4.7 shows that for 83% of material composted a single distribution option is used. Just under half (49%) of total material composted is sold, 22% is used on-site and 12% given away. For 17% of material composted a combination of two or more of these options is used. Results show that there is no clear pattern between site size and distribution route used.

A total of 11 sites (9% of all sites) were responsible for composting the 49% of material that is distributed through the 'sold only' option. However, the vast majority of this material (93%) is composted by just 3 larger-scale sites.

A total of 29 sites (24% of all sites) are responsible for composting the 22% of material used on-site. The majority of these sites are very small-scale and are based at allotments or community gardens. The majority of material composted and used on-site (94%) is composted by 7 larger-scale sites. Sixteen sites (13% of all sites) give away the material they compost, with 3 larger-scale sites accounting for 88% of material composted and given away.

Fifty four sites (48% of all sites) use a combination of two or more of the distribution routes accounting for 17% of all material composted. Twenty-six of these sites use the combination of 'on-site and given away' options and most of these are very small-scale and part of a community garden project. Collectively they account for just 5% of total material distributed using a combination of routes. The other twenty-six sites that use a combination of routes all rely on selling a proportion of the material they compost.

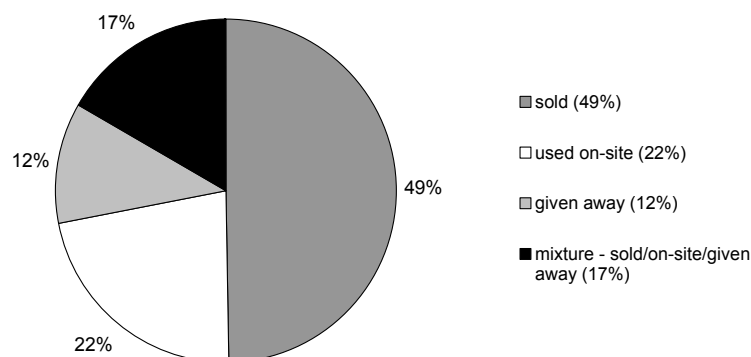


Figure 4.7 - Proportion of material composted that was sold, used on-site or given away

4.2.7 Promoting home composting

The survey asked respondents about whether and how they are involved in promoting home composting within their local community. A total of 60 organisations said they are actively involved in promoting home composting. Two-thirds of these organisations also run one or more composting site.

There are a variety of ways in which community groups are involved in promoting home composting. These include: running a master composter programme; running a telephone helpline; distributing home composting bins; providing education literature and display stands and running/attending events. Figure 4.8 shows the number of organisations involved in specific home composting activities; around 60% of organisations are involved in more than one of these activities. In addition to the activities listed in Figure 4.8, 3 organisations said they run a demonstration site for home composting.

These figures suggest that promoting home composting is an important activity for community sector organisations. Although this will contribute to organic material diverted from landfill as a result of increased home composting this survey has not attempted to quantify this. This is because meaningful estimates of material composted via home composting is very difficult and complex and there is not accepted and standardised approach as yet, although WRAP has developed a methodology currently awaiting approval from Defra.

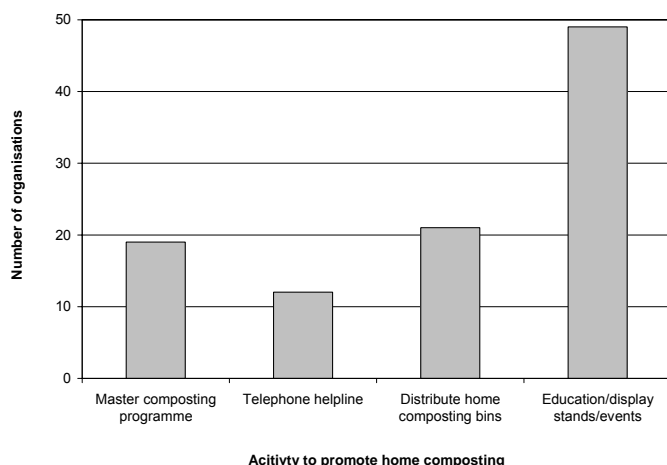


Figure 4.8 – Number of organisations involved in specific activities to promote home composting in their community

4.3 Location of community composting organisations, sites and quantities composted by region

The regional location of community composting organisations, sites and quantities composted recorded in the survey are summarised in Table 4.7. The vast majority of composting activity reported in the survey (e.g. 87% of tonnes composted) was carried out in England. The most active areas in terms of quantities composted were the North (North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humberside) and South West, with relatively little activity reported for the Midlands, East of England and the South East.

Table 4.7 - Number of community composting organisations, number of sites and quantities composted by region

Region	Organisations		Sites		Quantities composted	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	tonnes	percentage
North East	4	4%	7	6%	3010	14%
North West	8	7%	7	6%	4080	20%
Yorkshire & Humber	14	13%	17	14%	4600	22%
Midlands	6	6%	7	6%	1215	6%
East of England	5	5%	3	2%	45	<1%
London	27	25%	22	18%	250	1%
South West	22	20%	27	22%	4073	20%
South East	10	9%	5	4%	877	4%
Sub-total for England	96	89%	95	78%	18150	87%
Wales	6	6%	4	3%	2070	10%
Scotland ⁶	6	6%	22	19%	535	3%
Total	108	100%	121	100%	20755	100%

Note – not all percentage columns add to 100% due to rounding

⁶ Refers to responses from CRN Scotland members. For a more comprehensive picture of community composting in Scotland (CRNS members and non-members) see *Mapping of the Scottish Community Composting Sector (2007)*, published by CRNS.

Community composting schemes in urban areas tend to be connected to allotments, community gardens or city farms. Results show that typically these operate at a very small scale, processing <10tpa. This can be seen in the results summarised in Table 4.7 which show that London has the highest number of community composting organisations compared to other regions - around one in five community sites are based in London - and their small scale nature is reflected in the fact that they account for only 1% of material processed. Around half of the organisations that operate sites in London are also involved in promoting home composting. Around one-third of all London based organisations do not operate sites but are involved in composting education and promotion.

The largest numbers of sites recorded in the survey are based in the South West, which also has a well established regional network - Devon Community Composting Network. One-fifth of all material composted by the sector was carried out in this region. Most organisations in the South West run one-site with two respondents running multiple sites. All except two of the respondents operate sites, these two respondents are involved in composting education and promotion but both have future plans to open sites. Half of the sites in the South West are small scale composting <40tpa or less, around one-quarter compost between 50-150tpa and one-quarter compost >400tpa with the largest site reporting just under 1,000tpa. Just under half of the organisations who responded said they are involved in promoting home composting.

Ten of the 14 organisations based in Yorkshire and Humberside run sites. Three of the four that do not currently operate sites have plans to do so. Most composters run single sites with two organisations operating multiple sites. Roughly half the sites in this region compost <20tpa, with half composting >400tpa. Around half of the organisations said they are involved in promoting home composting.

Three of the four organisations in the North East run sites; one organisation operates several small-scale sites (processing <10tpa) and one organisation operates one large scale site (processing >1,000tpa). This large-scale site explains why the proportion of material composted in the North East compared to the number of sites in this region is larger than in some other regions. Three of these organisations said they are involved in promoting home composting.

Six of the eight organisations in the North West run sites and five of these operate single sites. One of the two organisations that do not operate a site said it has plans to do so. The vast majority of material composted in the North West is carried out at one large-scale site with the remaining sites each composting <40tpa. As in the North West this one large-scale site explains why the proportion of material composted in this region compared to number of sites is larger than in other regions. Three of the organisations in the North West said they are involved in promoting home composting.

5. People involved in community composting – volunteers, trainees and staff

The survey asked respondents to indicate, on average, the number of paid staff, trainees and volunteers involved in their community composting activity and whether these workers are full or part-time. It should be noted that acquiring precise data on workers is difficult due to seasonal variations, allocating time specific to composting activity and availability of volunteers. Also, commitment of individual volunteers may vary significantly and it was therefore inappropriate to ask respondents to estimate 'full-time-equivalent' for part-time workers. Given these caveats data in Table 5.1 should be treated as indicative only.

Three-quarters of respondents actively involved in community composting (80 out of 108) provided information about staff and volunteers. Results in Table 5.1 show the reported number of full and part-time workers involved in community composting activities. This shows the sector relies heavily on part-time volunteers; around three-quarters of all workers recorded are volunteers and over 95% of these work part-time.

Table 5.1 - Number of core paid staff, trainees, placements and volunteers involved in community composting activities

Category	Number of workers		Total workers full and part-time
	full-time	part-time	
Core, paid staff	93	85	178
Trainees and placements	73	139	212
Volunteers	33	968	1001
Total	199	1192	1391

Results show that one-third of community composting organisations are entirely dependant on volunteers and have no paid staff. Around half of the organisations work with 5 volunteers or fewer, around one-quarter of organisations have more than 10 volunteers and 5 organisations reported working with more than 30 volunteers.

Many projects work with disadvantaged groups including long-term unemployed and special needs groups. The 'volunteer' category in Table 5.1 includes volunteers that are registered unemployed. In total the survey reported 17 volunteers registered unemployed who are working full-time and 209 who are working part-time.

The trainees and placements category includes formal training schemes, work integration schemes and schemes that work with service user groups. Around one-quarter of organisations use trainees and/or placements, mostly on a part-time basis. Eleven organisations have 5 or fewer trainees/placements, 9 organisations have 6 or more trainees/placements and 4 of these organisations have more than 20 placements/trainees.

Two-thirds of community composting organisations employ a small number of full and/or part-time staff. Almost 90% of groups employ 5 or fewer paid staff and half of these employ 1 or 2 staff members.

Organisations involved in running sites and processing material show a different worker profile compared to organisations involved in promoting composting but not operating sites. For example, organisations not involved in running sites reported no trainees or placements. They accounted for 16% of all paid workers, 12% of full time volunteers and 36% of full time volunteers. This seemingly large proportion of part-time volunteers working for groups that promote composting but do not run sites is accounted for by one organisation running a widespread master composter programme that works with a large number of part-time volunteers.

As with other areas of the community composting sector the survey found no 'one' typical pattern related to staff and volunteers opportunities. However, there do appear to be a number of different models relating to staff and volunteers which reflect the wider objectives of certain organisations. These models appear to have the following characteristics:

- **Organisations with no core staff using a small number of volunteers.**
Volunteers tend to be householders/allotment holders working collectively to run a small site and compost/use their own garden waste;
- **Organisations with a small number of core staff and larger number of volunteers.**
Volunteers tend to be householders involved in composting education and promotion, e.g. master composter programmes;
- **Organisations with a small number of core staff that offer training and intermediate labour markets for disadvantaged/excluded groups.**
E.g. groups that work with the probation service to offer training and work integration opportunities;
- **Organisations with a small number of core staff that offer therapeutic work for special needs groups.**
Volunteers/placements might be users of services aimed at providing social interaction and improving the long-term prospects of individuals with special needs.

6. Working with Local Authorities

This report highlights the diversity of the community composting sector and the range of different organisations involved. Whatever the organisation type a good working relationship with the local authority is likely to be beneficial to the success of a scheme. Social enterprises may already have, or aspire to have, formal arrangements with local authorities for service provision. Other community groups will be smaller scale and not in a position to tender for contracts, but may have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or Service Level Agreement (SLA) with their authority. Some groups may be in dialogue with their authority but have no formalised relationship. Whatever the position, a good relationship with the local authority is important for developing understanding, building trust and exploring what services the community groups is able to provide and what resources the authority can offer.

6.1 Which Local Authority departments do community composters work with?

The survey asked organisations about whether and how they work/liase with their local authority. Around three-quarters of respondents (79 out of 108) provided information to this section. The majority of respondents said they work with their local authority (82%) and 14 respondents (18%) said they do not work or liaise with their authority.

Around 85% of groups that work with their local authority work with the waste/recycling/environment department. Over half of these (60%) work exclusively with this department and the remainder (40%) also work with other departments, the most frequently cited being economic development/regeneration and social services and the least frequently cited being housing, education and health.

6.2 Type of working arrangement

There are a variety of working arrangements that a community organisation may have with the local authority. The survey asked about contracts, service level agreements (SLA), memorandum of understanding (MoU), grants, recycling credits and informal/dialogue arrangements. Results in Figure 6.1 show the number of organisations involved in each working arrangement, some organisations are involved in 2 or more of these arrangements.

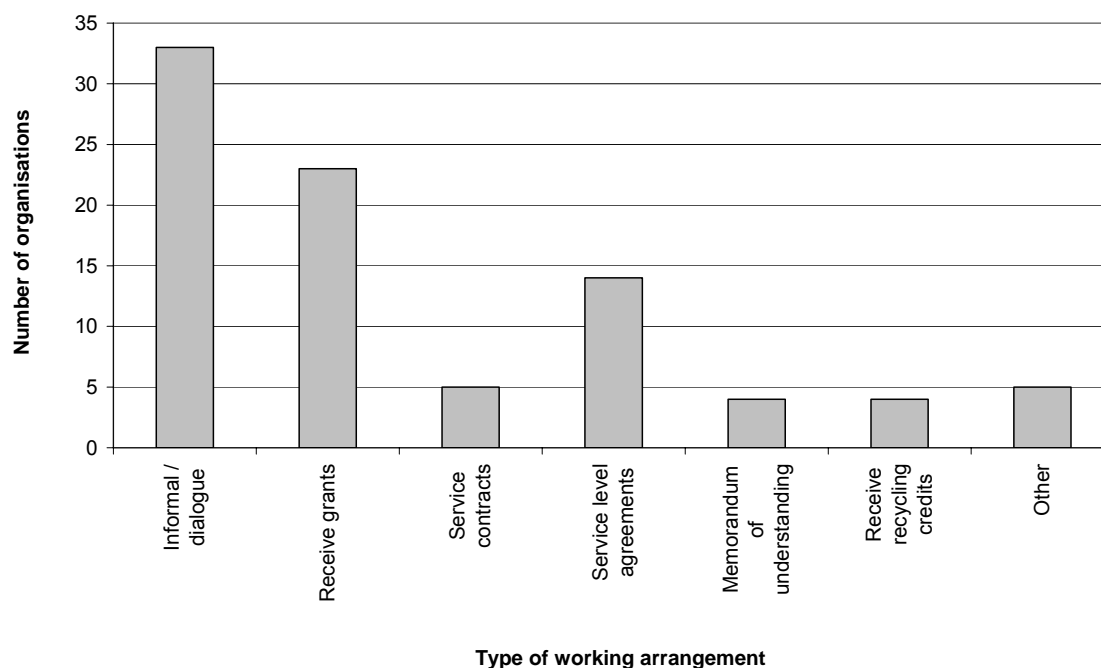


Figure 6.1 - Number of organisations involved in specific working arrangements with local authorities

Figure 6.1 shows that the most common working arrangement with local authorities is an informal one. This is an important early stage for the development of organisations to help build understanding and awareness between the organisation and authority and reflects the relatively young nature of the sector in terms of working with authorities and developing service provision. A number of respondents commented on the importance of ongoing communication and dialogue with authorities although this can be a long and time consuming process. One respondent said it had taken 3 years of working closely with their authority and demonstrating their capability and potential in order to arrive at a stage where the authority has agreed to pay recycling credits.

Around one-third of organisations receive some form of grant funding from local authorities, and in some cases this may be underpinned by an SLA.

Around 20% of organisations have an SLA - a specific commitment between the organisation and authority that stipulates agreed performance and outcomes. An SLA provides more formality and security compared to a MoU and in some cases may supersede a MoU. A MoU is a non-statutory document that outlines how the community organisation and local authority plan to work together. Figure 6.1 shows that of those respondents that supplied information on working arrangements only 4 have a MoU with their local authority. A SLA is likely to be important for organisational development and could be a step towards full service contracts for larger social enterprises, although this will be dependant upon a tendering and procurement process. Figure 6.1 shows that 5 respondents have full service contracts with their authority.

Five respondents said they had an 'other' type of working arrangement with their authority, explanations given include support from the authority in terms of staff time and/or equipment hire, sharing of best practice and 'armed truce'.

6.3 Success factors and barriers

The survey asked whether community composting organisations have a positive and successful relationship with their local authority and if so, what are the key success factors? The survey also asked whether organisations had encountered problems or barriers to working with local authorities.

Most organisations who answered this section (56 out of 71, 79%) said they have a positive relationship with their authority. Key factors appear to include:

- clear communication and ongoing dialogue;
- good relationships between key individuals;
- positive attitude of council towards the community sector and social enterprises;
- support from councils in terms of staff, equipment and recycling credits (although the latter appears variable).

Several respondents commented that their relationship with the council had been dependent on key individuals working at the council and when they moved on the relationship with the council declined. Other respondents commented that building a positive relationship had been a struggle, especially in terms of time taken to access the council and develop communication channels and that whilst historically interest in the sector had been poor this now seemed to be improving.

Results show that building the pathway to these successful relationships has not been easy. Over 60% of respondents said they had encountered problems to working with the local authority, and two-thirds of these were respondents who said they now have a successful working relationship. According to respondents difficulties include:

- councils hold the community sector in low esteem and take an authoritarian attitude;
- lack of joined up thinking in councils, lack of communication between departments, each department has different aims - small community groups are trapped in the middle;
- competition between community group activity and council schemes;
- communication with the council - gaining access, developing and maintaining communication channels;
- community groups are instructed by the council rather than being able to influence the process;
- councils' lack of flexibility;
- councils are very slow in making decisions.

7. Scheme performance - evaluating and demonstrating impact

7.1 Importance placed on evaluating and demonstrating impacts

Results show that evaluating and demonstrating impacts of schemes varies in importance for community composting groups. Results from 80 organisations show that just under half (48%) said that evaluation is very important, just over one-third (36%) said evaluation is quite important and 16% said evaluation is not important.

The level of importance of evaluation does not appear to be related to site size. Analysis of quantities composted across tonnage size bands shows no significant variation in the importance placed on evaluation. However, the importance placed on evaluation does appear to vary in

relation to organisations' future plans. Evaluation is 'very' or 'quite' important for 95% of organisations with plans to expand their composting activity, whereas 50% of organisations with no plans to expand said evaluation of scheme performance is not important to them.

This suggests that organisations wishing to develop their activity recognise the importance and benefits of evaluating and demonstrating the impacts of their schemes. Whilst meaningful evaluation is important, it can be resource intensive and some groups commented that they need to focus their limited resources on composting activity rather than evaluation.

7.2 How impacts are measured

The survey asked organisations about whether and how they measure their performance against their environmental, social and educational objectives. Around one-third of respondents (31%) said they do not carry out any measurement. Not surprisingly this includes all but one of the 13 organisations that said evaluation is not important. In addition 10 organisations who said evaluation is important do not currently carry out any measurement and most of these said they would benefit from help to develop evaluation methods. This raises questions about whether lack of resources and capacity have constrained evaluation options for these organisations.

Just over one-in-ten organisations (11%) carries out evaluation that focuses exclusively on environmental objectives. Around one-third of organisations (34%) said they measure performance towards environmental, social and educational objectives. A further 16% measure progress towards their environmental and social or educational objectives.

Only 7% of organisations focus on social and/or educational objectives and not environmental ones. These were largely city/community farms typically with very small-scale sites or education based organisations.

Respondents who measure objectives were asked to describe how they are measured. Descriptions given were almost exclusively quantitative and are summarised below (the number in brackets relates to the number of organisations that cited this measure):

Environmental Objectives	Social Objectives	Educational Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • estimate tonnes collected / composted (28) • compost produced / sales (8) • home composting bins sold (3) • participation levels (2) • recycling credits (2) • fuel/mileage saved (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of trainees / volunteers (19) • number of employment opportunities (7) • visitors at events, using gardens etc (10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of school visits (23) • number of workshops/talk/events (12) • number of hours master composters work (2) • qualifications obtained (3) • number of leaflets distributed (2)

Some of these measures overlap between the categories, for example 'number of visitors' could fit with both social and educational objectives if the 'visit' has an educational element.

These measures are all concerned with quantity and are predominantly associated with measuring project *outputs* - the activities carried out in order to achieve the project's aims. However, project *outcomes* - the impacts and effects of the community composting activity - are also important and can be seen as the most meaningful in terms of whether the project's objectives are being met. Outcomes are related to the quality of activity as well as quantity. Outcomes are more difficult to measure compared to outputs - often impacts on people and places takes time to evolve and develop and involve more intangible, invisible and softer qualitative elements, e.g. improved self-esteem / sense of wellbeing from involvement with projects, improvement in local environment / green spaces, improved awareness of organic

wastes management, developing more cohesion in the local community. Although none of the survey respondents described qualitative measures when asked about evaluation, they did raise qualitative issues when asked how they know their project is valued and going well, and these are detailed below.

7.3 How do organisations know their project is valued and going well?

In addition to questions on measurement, respondents were asked how they know when their project is going well. A wide variety of descriptions were given. These include some of the hard quantitative measures mentioned above. However, softer qualitative outcomes were frequently cited (although the previous section has shown that these are not captured in evaluation). A selection of these is given below:

Soft, qualitative factors:

- adults with special needs get benefit and satisfaction
- positive feedback from special needs support agencies
- regularly quoted as being useful by other organisations in the area
- people love the compost
- less interference from officialdom
- community gardens supported by local groups
- support of local people and positive feedback from users
- good local press
- people keep coming back
- list of people who want to volunteer
- appearance of area is greener
- less smells and mess in the area
- good way to get to know like minded people

As mentioned in the introduction, this survey forms part of a larger project about the potential of community composting. The next stage of this project will work more closely with a number of groups to help explore these qualitative factors in more detail and to help groups develop ways to better understand and demonstrate these impacts.

8. Income and funding

The survey asked respondents to provide financial data relating to their community composting activity - including earned income/recycling credits and income from grants - and to provide total income for their organisations (i.e. from composting and non-composting activity). This section received the poorest response in the questionnaire, with 47 of the 108 respondents (43%) active in community composting providing useable financial information.

Table 8.1 - Total income for all respondents and income from/for community composting activity (grants and earned income)

Total number of respondents	Individual turnover from composting activity (£)	Income from/for community composting			Total income for all respondents (all activities) (£)	Proportion of community composting income to total income (%)
		Grants (£)	Earned income (£)	Total (£)		
15	0	0	0	0	187,200	0
15	≤4,999	6,400	14,725	21,125	21,443	99
17	≥5,000	568,100	461,500	1,029,600	4,730,700	22

Table 8.1 summarises the financial data and shows a clear trend in terms of the relative proportions of organisations income associated with community composting activity. Fifteen respondents receive no income from/for their community composting activity. Typically these

are community gardens, allotment groups or small community groups that run very-small scale sites. Five of these respondents receive income from/for activities other than composting.

For another 15 respondents income from composting represents virtually all their income (99%) and nearly all these respondents focus exclusively on community composting activity (i.e. they are not involved in other waste or non-waste activities). Eleven of these respondents receive no grant funding; all their income is earned - mainly through recycling credits for green waste. Most of these are small-scale operations whose income averages around £1,400 per organisation. Around half these respondents said they would like to expand their community composting activity.

In contrast, most of the 17 respondents that make up the group in the last row in Table 8.1 are involved to a large extent in a wide range of waste and non-waste activities in addition to community composting. Six of these respondents have significant total annual income (>£200k per group) and for individual groups the contribution from composting varies, accounting for between 4-30% of their total income. The survey did not collect information on non-composting sources of income.

Fourteen of 17 organisations in this group receive grant funding for community composting activity and for 5 of these it is their only source of income for this work (i.e. they reported no earned income). Nine organisations reported a mix of earned income and grant funding and three organisations rely on earned income and receive no grant funding. The size of organisations in this grouping are spread from smaller organisations through to some of the largest reported in the survey. All these organisations reported an annual income from community composting in excess of £5,000, and in half the cases this increased to at least £50,000. Table 8.1 shows that just over half (55%) of income from community composting for these groups comes from grant funding with the remainder (45%) from earned income. On average, income from composting activity contributes around one-fifth of these organisations' total income.

These results show that groups involved in a range of activities have received more income from grant funding for their composting activity compared to those that focus exclusively on community composting. This raises questions about whether larger organisations involved in composting and non-composting activities have been better placed to receive grant funding. An analysis of funding allocated under the Community Recycling and Economic Development (CRED) Programme⁷ showed that over 70% of grant funding recorded in the survey was sourced from CRED. This Programme has now closed and composting initiatives set up under CRED will need to secure alternative sources of income to remain viable. Further research is needed to explore the nature of future income and in particular the balance between grant aid and expanding the capacity of the sector through a greater emphasis on commercial activity and local authority service provision.

9. Problems and barriers to community composting activity

The survey asked respondents whether they had experienced problems in running or developing their community composting activity. This was an open question asking respondents to describe the problem in their own words. A total of 86 respondents completed this section, and of these 64 (75%) said they had encountered problems.

⁷ The CRED Programme was funded by the Big Lottery Fund through its Transforming Waste Initiative. CRED closed to new applications in August 2005 and projects have until the end of 2007 to complete their CRED funded work.

The most frequently cited problem was legislation and bureaucracy, followed by funding issues, lack of space/suitable site, and lack of volunteers/time commitment involved. These and other problems highlighted are summarised below (the numbers in brackets relate to the number of respondents that named this barrier):

- Legislation and bureaucracy (22)
 - Animal By-Products Regulations (ABPR) (2005) - comments given include the cost and time involved in compliance (4)
 - Waste Management Licensing - costs of compliance and import/export restrictions (4)
 - Planning Regulations - comments related to time and difficulties in securing planning (6)
- Lack of funding and funding insecurity (17)
- Lack of space / suitable site (14)
- Lack of volunteers / time commitment too high (12)
- Lack of cooperation / support from local council (7)
- Lack of commitment within the local community (5)
 - Reluctance to separate / store food waste (2)
- Impossible to compete with large waste companies (2)
- Risks involved in securing end-markets (12 months of quality testing) (1)

Suggestions offered by respondents to overcome some of these barriers include:

- Greater understanding by government and local councils of the potential contribution and value of the voluntary/social sector;
- More help from local people who use the site;
- Simplify legislation, start-up procedures and reduce costs for small-scale activities with low environmental impact;
- Long-term contractual relationships.

10. Age of the sector and future plans

The survey asked respondents when they commenced their involvement with composting. Results show an even split with half of organisations being involved with community composting for 5 years or less and half for more than 5 years. This profile was observed regardless of quantities composted.

Despite problems encountered, results portray a positive outlook from community composting organisations, with over three-quarters of respondents (65 out of 85, 77%) expressing a desire to develop or expand their activities. Most of these want to expand their composting activity in terms of quantity of material collected and processed, number of sites, quality and quantity of compost produced. Fifteen respondents said they want to develop to collect and compost food waste, some mentioned both householders and commercial premises, and several want to include high-rise estates. Two of these are about to embark on relatively large-scale food waste composting schemes servicing thousands households. Another two of these are from previously operational schemes that ceased with the introduction of ABPR.

A small number of respondents want to work with more schools, help other groups set up their activity, and expand into wider sustainability areas such as local food production and distribution.

Groups are also keen to develop their relationships with local authorities. Just under 90% (50 out of 57) of respondents who currently work with local authorities said they want to expand this work in the future, and 66% (11 out of 15) of respondents who do not currently work with local authorities said they would like to in the future.

11. Concluding remarks

Although composting is an age-old process, the emergence and development of a coherent and defined community composting sector, as with the commercial composting sector, is relatively young. In response to European and national policies promoting more sustainable resource management there has been investment to develop composting capacity, some of which has been available to the community sector.

This investment over the last few years is reflected in the results with half of organisations in the community composting sector being involved in composting for 5 years or less. Comparison with previously published information⁸ shows that the number of organisations running community based sites has increased ten-fold since the late 1990s and quantities of material composted at community sites has increased around fourteen-fold from approximately 1,500tpa to 21,000tpa.

When considering tonnage it is important to bear in mind that this figure relates specifically to tonnage composted at community sites and that there are additional areas where the community sector has a positive impact on material diverted from landfill for which tonnages have not been estimated in this survey. For example, one social enterprise organisation makes a significant contribution to organic waste composting by collecting over 20,000 tonnes of organic waste each year. This material is composted at commercial sites and hence not included in the tonnage for community sites but nevertheless is an important element of community sector activity. In addition, the community sector plays an important role in education and promotion of home composting and hence diversion of organic material from landfill. Estimating material composted via home composting is very difficult and complex, and there is no accepted and standardised approach as yet⁹. Distribution of home composting bins may be an important evaluation element but is insufficient to assess the impact of the community sector where programmes such as Master Composting focus on spreading education in the community rather than distributing bins. Clearly this is an area that needs development to better understand the impact of the community composting sector.

The findings presented in this report represent the most comprehensive picture of the community composting available to-date and highlight the diversity of the sector and range of activities organisations are involved in. Appreciating this diversity and how it often cuts across different government policy areas is important in understanding what the sector can offer and how it can be supported. For 40% of organisations composting is their main objective and activity. For 60% of organisations composting is a complementary activity to help achieve other, often social, objectives. Composting may be carried out alongside other waste and recycling activities, or more commonly, alongside non-waste activities such as community gardens, city farms, local food production, day and residential services for adults with special needs and work integration schemes. These activities may bring about positive environmental impacts and social benefits for local communities over and above quantities of material diverted from landfill. Knowing and understanding these impacts and benefits is really important in knowing and understanding the role of the community composting sector. Softer and more intangible benefits may be recognised by community organisations but are unlikely to be captured in evaluation - possibly because of their often qualitative nature. The next stage of this project will work more closely with a number of community organisations to help explore this in more detail and develop ways to better understand and demonstrate these impacts.

The proximity principle is an important element of sustainability and underpins the ethos of community composting, therefore sites are local and small-scale - two-thirds of all sites process

⁸ See Slater et al (2001) reference in the Executive Summary footnote.

⁹ WRAP has developed a methodology currently awaiting approval from Defra

≤30tpa. To-date development of the sector has relied predominantly on composting garden waste mainly from households.

The introduction of the Animal By-Products Regulations has made it difficult and costly for developing food waste composting. One in-vessel system suitable for community composting projects has received ABPR approval and others are in the pipeline. A number of schemes are developing food waste composting; some of these are in-situ at premises with catering facilities (e.g. prisons, schools, leisure facilities), others service householders including areas where traditional waste services are unsuitable or absent (e.g. the emergence of estates based food-waste composting, particularly in London). Composting food waste from householders and commercial premises could provide significant opportunities for the sector and is expected to develop substantially over the next few years. Fifteen respondents want to expand into food waste composting and two are about to embark on relatively large-scale projects servicing thousands of households.

It might be expected that activity at individual sites expands over time; i.e. new sites are relatively small and more established sites are larger. Results show this is not necessarily the case. In each of the throughput categories (size bands illustrated in Figure 4.6) roughly half of organisations have been involved with composting for 5 years or less and half for 5 years or more. However, some respondents commented that expansion has been limited by lack of space or suitable sites.

In terms of what community organisations would like to do, the outlook is optimistic. Around three-quarters of organisations want to expand and develop their activity. However, building on this optimism and seizing development opportunities means overcoming numerous barriers. In addition to lack of space and suitable sites, these include legislation and bureaucracy, lack of funding and the level of time and commitment involved.

Appendix 1 - questionnaire

A Survey of Community Composting & Free Prize Draw - Deadline Friday 16th February

Section 1 - General details

Q1 Contact details

Name of organisation / project:

Address:	Tel:
	Fax:
Post code:	Email:
Name of respondent:	Website:

Q2 Which of the following best describes the legal status of your organisation / project?

- ☐ **Informal group working** (no governing document)
- ☐ **Un-incorporated with governing document** (e.g. Not for profit with a constitution)
- ☐ **Incorporated** (if yes, please tick which one)
- ☐ Registered Charity
- ☐ Company Limited by Guarantee
- ☐ Community Interest Company
- ☐ Industrial and Provident Society
- ☐ Other (please detail)

Q3 Would you describe your organisation as operating at a national level (operating in dispersed areas across the country), regional level (operating across one of the regions listed in Q4 below), or at a local level? (please tick)

- ☐ National
- ☐ Regional
- ☐ Local

Q4 In which area(s) is your organisation / project(s) involved in community composting? (please tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> North East | <input type="checkbox"/> West Midlands | <input type="checkbox"/> South East |
| <input type="checkbox"/> North West | <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern England | <input type="checkbox"/> Wales |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yorkshire and Humber | <input type="checkbox"/> London | <input type="checkbox"/> Scotland |
| <input type="checkbox"/> East Midlands | <input type="checkbox"/> South West | |

Q5 When did your organisation get involved with community composting? (please give month/year)

Month Year

Q6 Is your organisation / project's community composting activity....(tick one box only)

☐ for a fixed / limited time period

☐ ongoing

☐ currently fixed / limited but with plans to continue

☐ other (please give details)

Q7 Is **composting activity** (i.e. collection and/or processing and/or promotion/education) the main activity of your organisation / project?

☐ No

☐ Yes

Q8 Is your organisation / project also significantly involved in **minimisation / reuse / recycling** of non-organic materials? (e.g. furniture reuse, dry recyclables)

☐ No

☐ Yes (please give details below)

Q9 Is your organisation / project also significantly involved in other activities **not related to minimisation / reuse / recycling / composting**?

☐ No

☐ Yes (please give details below)

Q10 How important are other activities in relation to your organisation / project's involvement with community composting?

☐ More important

☐ Less important

☐ Same importance

☐ Don't know / difficult to separate

Section 2 - About your organisation / project

Q11 How do you know if your community composting project is valued by the people you aim to benefit? And how do you know when your project is going well?

Q12 What does your organisation / project set out to achieve through community composting? Please tick the box that best describes the importance to your organisation for **each** of the aims listed. If what you aim to do is not listed, please give details.

	Aims	Most important	Fairly important	Slightly important	Not applicable
Environmental	Divert waste from landfill (e.g. through re-use, recycling, composting)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Promote waste minimisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Improve local soil quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Improve local environment / green spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social	Jobs for disadvantaged individuals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Training for disadvantaged individuals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Bringing together and involving the local community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Creating a sense of ownership/civic pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational	Education aimed at householders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Education aimed at schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Education aimed at local businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Education about organic resources / wastes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Education about managing non-organic resources more sustainably	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Education beyond resources to more sustainable living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q13 Does your community composting work contribute to social and environmental benefits / impacts in your local area in addition to those outlined in Q12?

☐ No

☐ Yes (please say how you think your project benefits your local community)

Q14 Does your organisation measure what it sets out to achieve? Please answer yes or no for each of the categories. If yes please give details of criteria or indicators (e.g. number of trainees, composted material used locally, transport avoided etc).

Aims	Do you measure progress towards your aims?	If yes, please describe criteria or indicators used
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Social	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	

Q15 How important is it for your organisation to evaluate and demonstrate the impacts of its work?

- ☐ Very important
☐ Quite important
☐ Not important

Q16 Would your organisation benefit from help in developing criteria / indicators to evaluate and demonstrate the impact of its work?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes

Q17 What type of area / neighbourhood does your organisation work in with community composting activity? (please tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inner city households | <input type="checkbox"/> Schools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Urban households | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban households | <input type="checkbox"/> Prisons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rural households | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial (e.g. hotel, pub) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High rise estates | <input type="checkbox"/> Allotments / community gardens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low rise estates | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)..... |
| | |

Section 3 - Your Community Composting Work

Q18 Is your organisation involved in **collecting / receiving** material for community composting?

☐ No

☐ Yes (please answer a) and b) below)

a) How do you collect / receive the material?

☐ Kerbside collection

☐ Material is brought to you

☐ Collect from civic amenity or bring sites

☐ Other (please detail).....

b) Approximately how much material did you collect in 2006? (note - tonnage data will be treated in confidence and aggregated to produce overall results)

☐ less than 10 tonnes

☐ 51-100 tonnes

☐ 10 -30 tonnes

☐ 101-500 tonnes (please specify)

☐ 31 – 50 tonnes

☐ over 500 tonnes (please specify)

Q19 Is your organisation involved in actually **composting** organic material?

☐ No

☐ Yes (please answer a) b) c) and d) below)

a) How many sites for processing material does your organisation run/coordinate?

b) How do you process the material?

☐ Open air windrows / heaps

☐ Anaerobic digestion / biogas

☐ In-vessel

☐ Other (please specify)

c) Approximately how much material did you process in 2006? (note - tonnage data will be treated in confidence and aggregated to produce overall results)

☐ less than 10 tonnes

☐ 51-100 tonnes

☐ 10 -30 tonnes

☐ 101-500 tonnes (please specify)

☐ 31 – 50 tonnes

☐ over 500 tonnes (please specify)

d) What did you do with the composted material?

☐ Sold

☐ Given away

☐ Used in your project

☐ Other (please specify)

Q20 Where does the waste your organisation collects / processes come from? (please tick all that apply)

☐ Households from approx how many on a regular basis?

☐ Schools from approx how many on a regular basis?

☐ Shops/offices/restaurants from approx how many on a regular basis?

☐ Landscapers from approx how many on a regular basis?

☐ Farm from approx how many on a regular basis?

☐ Other (please specify)

Q21 What types of waste do you collect / process? (please tick all that apply)

☐ Garden waste from households

☐ Fruit and veg shop waste

☐ Household kitchen waste (**including meat**)

☐ Garden waste from commercial sources

☐ Household kitchen waste (**excluding meat**)

☐ Commercial kitchen waste (**including meat**)

☐ Local authority green waste (not domestic)

☐ Commercial kitchen waste (**excluding meat**)

☐ Other (please specify)

Q22 Is your organisation involved in promoting **home composting** in your community?

☐ No (please go to Q23)

☐ Yes (please answer a) below)

a) How is your organisation involved in promoting home composting?

☐ Run a master composter programme

☐ Run a telephone helpline

☐ Distribute home composting bins

☐ Education/display stands/events

☐ Other (please give details)

Q23 Is your organisation involved **education campaigns** and raising awareness of composting?

☐ No (please go to Q24)

☐ Yes (please give details)

Q24 If your organisation's involvement in community composting is not listed in Q18-23, or is in addition to that listed in Q18-23, please give details below

Q25 Future Plans

Would you like to develop / expand your community composting activity?

☐ No

☐ Yes (please give brief details of what you would like / plan to do)

Section 4 - People involved and funding sources

Q26 People involved. Please estimate how many people, on average, are involved with community composting in your organisation.

People involved in community composting	How many full-time?	How many part-time?
Core, paid staff		
Accredited trainees		
Volunteers registered unemployed		
Other volunteers		
Other placements (please specify)		

Q27 Financial data (note - this will be treated in confidence and aggregated to give overall results)

a) This question is about your organisation's income from **community composting** activity

Approx what is your annual income from community composting activity? £.....

Approx how much comes from grant funding? £

Approx how much comes from earned income / recycling credits? £

b) Approx what is your organisation's **total** annual income? £

Q28 Local Authorities

Does your organisation work / liaise with a local authority?

☐ No (please answer a) below then go to Q29)

☐ Yes (please detail below and then answer b) c) d) and e) below)

Which section / departments do you work with? (e.g. waste/recycling, economic/regeneration, social services). Please list all that apply.

a) If your organisation **does not** currently work with a local authority, would you like to in the future?

☐ No

☐ Yes

b) If your organisation **does** work with a local authority would you like to develop / expand this work in the future?

☐ No

☐ Yes

c) Which of the following best describes your working arrangement with the local authority?

☐ contracted service providers

☐ receive grant

☐ service level agreement

☐ informal / dialogue

☐ memorandum of understanding

☐ other (please give details)

.....

d) Does your organisation have a positive/successful relationship with the local authority?

☐ No

☐ Yes (please give details and key factors to this positive relationship)

e) Has your organisation encountered problems / barriers to working with local authorities?

☐ No

☐ Yes (please give details of problems and how you think these can be solved)

Section 5 - Barriers to community composting activity

Q29 a) Do you face problems or barriers in running or developing community composting activity

☐ No

☐ Yes (please give details and answer b) below)

b) How could these problems or barriers be solved or overcome?

Section 6 - Sharing experiences

Q30 Financial and tonnage data will be treated in confidence and aggregated to produce overall results. However, we may wish to put together a database of community composting to share experiences, e.g. different types of schemes, areas operated in and problems encountered. Would you be willing to share the information provided in this way?

☐ No

☐ Yes

Q31 Would you like to find out more about the Community Composting Network and/or London CRN

☐ Yes, please send me more information about the Community Composting Network

☐ Yes, please send me more information about the London Community Recycling Network

Q32 This survey is part of a larger research project called 'Unlocking the Potential of Community Composting' - see enclosed leaflet for details. Would you be interested in the possibility of being involved in this project, e.g. by discussing your project over the phone or being a best practice case-study?

☐ No

☐ Yes

Section 7 - What can the Community Composting Network do better?

Q33 Is your project currently a member of CCN?

☐ No (please answer a) and b) below)

☐ Yes (please go to Q34)

a) Has your project previously been a member of CCN?

☐ No

☐ Yes

b) Please tell us what factors have affected your decision regarding CCN membership?

☐ Had not heard of CCN

☐ Have no funds to subscribe

☐ Not worthwhile/relevant

☐ Other (please specify)

Previous members may wish to answer Q34 to tell us what you think of CCN services. Alternatively, please go to Q38 and Q39 if you have any other comments.

Q34 The table below gives a list of services which CCN currently provide for its members. Can you please rate those services:

Service / Rating		Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	No Experience
	The Growing Heap	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	CCN Website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Information Helpline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Demonstration Site Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Events Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Annual Conference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Sector Representation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Legislation Updates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	CCN E-mail News List	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you think a service needs improvement please tell us why?

Q35 Please rank the top three CCN services which you feel give the best support to your project:

☐ The Growing Heap

☐ CCN Website

☐ Information Helpline

☐ Legislation Updates

☐ Annual Conference

☐ Events Programme

☐ Sector Representation

☐ Creation of Funding Opportunities

Q36 CCN provide a consultancy service to support members requiring additional help.

Have you ever used this service?

☐ No (please go to Q37)

☐ Yes (please answer a) and b) below)

a) In what area was the support given?

☐ General Project Support

☐ Technical Expertise

☐ Business Planning

☐ Fundraising

☐ Other (please specify)

b) How would you rate the service you received?

☐ Good

☐ Satisfactory

☐ Poor (please tell us why)

Q37 Would you consider using CCN's consultancy service in the future?

☐ No (please specify your reason)

☐ Yes (please answer a) and b) below)

a) In what area/s would you consider seeking support?

☐ General Project Support

☐ Technical Expertise

☐ Business Planning

☐ Fundraising

☐ Other (please specify)

b) Would you like a member of CCN staff to contact you to discuss this in more detail?

☐ No

☐ Yes (contact name/telephone)

Q38 Is there anything else you think the CCN could do to support your project. This is your chance to tell us anything you think we should develop or do differently.

Q39 General comments - the opportunity to have your say. Do you have any other comments you would like to feedback to the Community Composting Network or London CRN?

Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete this questionnaire.

It is appreciated, and your information will be put to valuable use.

Good Luck in the Prize Draw !